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U.S. Is Pressing South Korea For Return of Park, Bell Says

By John M. Goshko

Washington Post Staff Writer

Attorney General Griffin B. Bell said yesterday that Washington is pressing the South Korean government for the return to the United States of Tongsun Park, key figure in alleged Korean efforts to buy influence in Congress.

Although Bell would not discuss specifics, he intimated that President Carter has been involved in what Bell called efforts "at the highest diplomatic levels" to bring Park within reach of Justice Department investigators.

Park, a businessman who had extensive contacts on Capitol Hill, fled to Britain after disclosure of allegations that he was the main South Korean agent in a campaign to influence Congress illegally. Department officials have admitted that inability to obtain his testimony is hampering their probe into whether members of Congress took bribes or committed other illegal acts.

At a press conference, Bell responded to questions about Park by saying: "We're trying to go through the State Department, and the President also is interested. I've talked with him about this, and he's done certain things. I've asked him to do to help me with this investigation."

When reporters asked if diplomatic efforts were being directed at the South Korean regime of President Park Chung Hee, Bell replied, "That would be a fair assumption."

Bell explained that the British government would not figure in the effort unless the United States requests Park's extradition. The Justice Department admits it does not now have sufficient legal grounds to take that step.

For that reason, department sources said, Washington has no choice at present but to try to induce Park's return through pressures exerted on him by the Seoul regime. Bell and

House deputy press secretary Rex Granum as saying:

"The President has been involved in attempts to try and get Tongsun Park back to the United States. As you can understand, this is a very delicate matter. But he has had some involvement—that's all I can say."

At the press conference, Bell also revealed that he has turned down a request from Tennessee state authorities to transfer James Earl Ray, convicted assassin of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., to federal custody.

Tennessee Gov. Ray Blanton asked that Ray be moved to a federal prison after he escaped from the Brushy Mountain state prison last month. Ray was recaptured 55 hours later. Bell made public a letter to Blanton in which he said, "I am confident that the state of Tennessee has adequate physical and legal resources to maintain the incarceration of Mr. Ray." He noted in the letter that no prisoner has escaped successfully from Brushy Mountain and added: "I am also advised that there are no problems concerning Mr. Ray's safety."

"I believe in leaving well enough alone," Bell said, conceding that he did not know what might happen if Ray were transferred to a federal institution. He said, "I'm not willing to undertake that risk. There's no reason to respond to other questions."

In response to other questions, Bell said he expects to meet Carter next week for a detailed discussion of a successor to retiring FBI Director Clarence M. Kelley. He said that he and the President might go outside their already announced list of five prospective candidates and pick someone else.

There have been persistent rumors that Bell and Carter are not satisfied with names suggested by a presidential search committee. Asked whether he would advise the President to look for someone else, Bell answered, "I

cause celebre in legal circles because Godstein had strong bipartisan support from people who feel he has been effective in prosecuting political corruption and organized crime. Bell also said he will soon give personal attention to possible prosecution of former Central Intelligence Agency Director Richard Helms on charges of perjury or obstruction of justice. The Justice Department has been investigating whether Helms lied when he told a Senate subcommittee under oath that there was no U.S. involvement in the overthrow of Chile's Marxist President Salvador Allende. Bell said recommendations from department attorneys on the Helms case had reached his office Tuesday. He added that "I need to give it a good deal of attention" and said "there will be developments on it in the normal course of events."

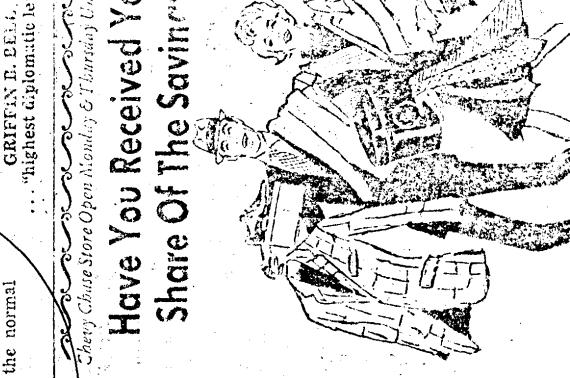
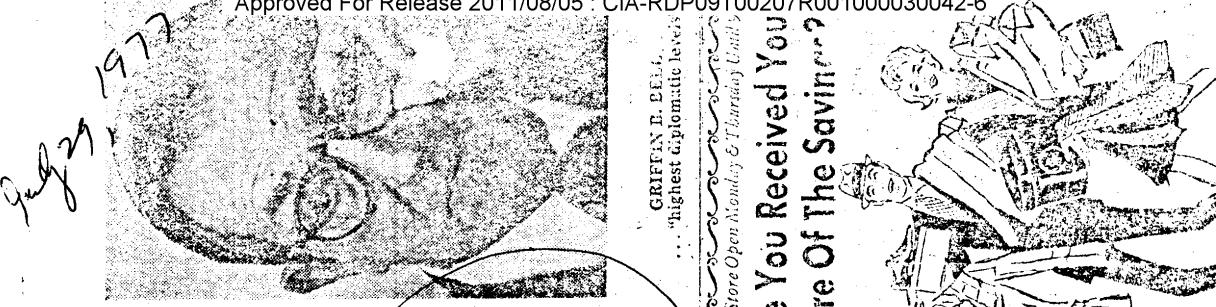
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